

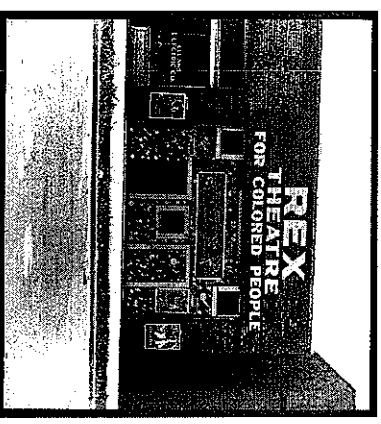
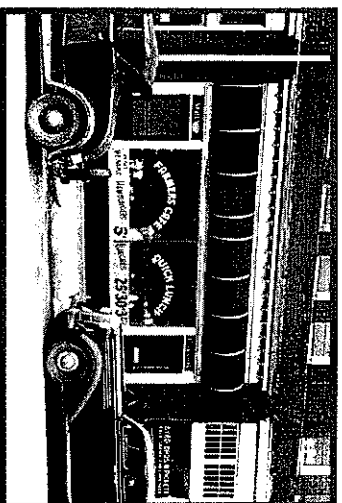
# Prime Stage Theatre

[www.primestage.com](http://www.primestage.com)

## Resource and Tour Guide

### The 1930's World of Scout, Jem, Dill and Atticus

**Number of States in the United States** 48 states. **Population:** 123,188,000 in 48 states - **Life Expectancy:** Male, 58.1 years; Female, 61.6 years. **Average salary:** \$1,368 - **Unemployment** rises to 25% - **Annual family income** was \$2,500. **Milk** - 14 cents a qt.; **Bread** - 9 cents a loaf; **Round Steak** - 42 cents a pound. By the 1930s, Kix, the first puffed cereal was on the market.



Durham, North Carolina. 1939. "A cafe in the warehouse district during tobacco auction season." Separate doors for "Colored" and "Whites."

## MUSIC



"It Don't Mean a Thing (if it Ain't Got That Swing)". This **Duke Ellington** song sums up the "in" music of the thirties. There were popular songs such as "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime" that spoke to the hardships of the time, but young people flocked to hear and dance to the big bands of Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Glenn Miller, and Tommy Dorsey. Broadway produced some of the most famous and lasting American musicals. George and Ira Gershwin wrote the hits *Strike Up the Band*, *Girl Crazy*, and *Of Thee I Sing*. Cole Porter produced such works as *Anything Goes*, and *Red Hot and Blue*. Irving Berlin, Johnny Mercer, and Richard Rodgers composed melodies that are still being played and sung today.

The Federal Music Project (FMP) supported the musical arts and sponsored performances of both classical and popular compositions. The FMP **emphasized** American music and promoted the works of Aaron Copland, Roy Harris and Virgil Thomson. In 1936 the Department of the Interior hired Woody Guthrie to travel throughout the Northwest and perform his folk songs. During this tour he wrote twenty-six songs in twenty-six days. By 1938 Guthrie was making appearances in support of labor unions and wrote such songs as "I Ain't Got No Home", inspired by visits to migrant labor camps.

It was in 1935 that George Gershwin's American folk opera *Porgy and Bess* was first performed. In 1931 Congress designated "The Star Spangled Banner" as the national anthem. In 1938 Kate Smith sang Irving Berlin's "God Bless America" and made the song her own. There have been many proponents of making this the national anthem, replacing the hard to sing "Star Spangled Banner". A young Mary Martin, who would go on to play the title role in *Peter Pan*, **captivated** audiences with "My Heart Belongs to Daddy" in Cole Porter's *Leave It to Me*.

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### LITERATURE

Many of America's most **distinguished** writers produced works of fiction during the Thirties. The list includes F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and Thornton Wilder. Some novels of this period explored what was happening in the country during the Great Depression. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* chronicled the life of a **displaced** Oklahoma family who lost its farm to the Dust Bowl. Richard Wright took on the issue of racial prejudice and the **plight** of blacks in *Native Son*. Erskine Caldwell's novel *Tobacco Road* described the life of poor whites in the rural South.

There were other **notable** works in literature. Carl Sandburg published his poem, "The People, Yes," in 1936. Ogden Nash wrote light verse for the New Yorker magazine. Dr. Seuss delighted children with his rhyming books for youngsters learning how to read. Wallace Stevens' collection of poetry, *The Man With the Blue Guitar*, was published in 1937. The public speaking instructor, Dale Carnegie, in 1936 penned the book whose title *How to Win Friends and Influence People* was to become a part of the language.

### RADIO



Since television had not yet been invented, radio reached its **zenith** of popularity in this decade. By 1939 about 80 percent of the population owned radio sets. Americans loved to laugh at the antics of such comedians as Jack Benny, Fred Allen, George Burns and Gracie Allen, Amos and Andy, and Fibber McGee and Molly. The soap opera **dominated** the daytime airwaves. *Our Gal Sunday* began each episode with the question, "Can a girl from a little mining town in the west find happiness as the wife of a wealthy and titled Englishman?" Many women were glued to their radio every day in the hopes of learning the answer. The heroics of the Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet, the Shadow, and Jack Armstrong: All-American boy, thrilled listeners both young and old and sold countless boxes of cereal. News broadcasts by Edward R. Murrow kept the public aware of the increasing crisis in Europe. Franklin Roosevelt used radio in his "Fireside Chats" to influence public opinion.

One of the most dramatic moments in radio history occurred on May 6, 1937, when the **German airship Hindenburg** burst into flames as it was about to land in Lakehurst, New Jersey. The horror of the incident was **conveyed** live by the reporter Herb Morrison. His reaction to what was happening in front of him still **enthralles** today. On October 30, 1938, a twenty-three-year-old Orson Welles broadcast on his Mercury Theater of the Air, the H.G. Wells story *War of the Worlds*. Despite the **disclaimer** at the end of the program, the tale of a Martian invasion of Earth panicked a million listeners who mistook the play for a newscast. Such was the influence of radio in this its **golden age**.



### SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The New York's **World Fair** of 1939 - true to its theme of "The World of Tomorrow" - gave its estimated 25.8 million visitors a glimpse of the future. The fairgoers **marveled** at the flickering images of a TV set at the RCA Building and were amazed at the General Motors exhibit of a seven-lane cross-country highway system. Many **innovations** at the fair did not become a part of every day life until after World War II, but there was a peek at the technology to come. Medical advances included a new and safer way to do blood transfusions. In 1937 Chicago's Cook County Hospital opened the first blood bank that stored blood given by live donors. This, with improved **anesthesia**, made the chances of surviving major surgery on vital organs much greater.

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In **physics**, ground breaking experiments in atom smashing were being conducted at such institutions as Columbia University and the California Institute of Technology. Albert Einstein **immigrated** to the United States in 1933 and became a professor at the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton University. From here in 1939 he wrote his famous letter to President Roosevelt recommending the development of the atomic bomb. In the field of **astronomy** the ninth major planet, **Pluto**, was discovered in 1930.

Industrial research led to better refrigeration for foods, products made from **synthetic** materials such as plexiglass, nylon, and **cellophane**, and improved manufacturing techniques such as **polymerization**, which increased production of gasoline by nine million gallons a year. In 1938 American physicist Chester F. Carlson made the first copy by an **electrostatic** process called **xerography**.

## MOVIES

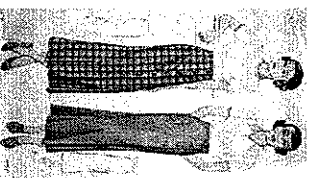
Hollywood turned out movie after movie to entertain its Depression audience and the 30's are often referred to as Hollywood's "Golden Age". Movie goers wanted mainly **escapist** films that let them forget their everyday troubles for a few hours. They **swooned** over such **matinee idols** as Clark Gable, Bette Davis, Greta Garbo, and Errol Flynn. America fell in love with the little curly headed moppet **Shirley Temple** and flocked to see her tap dance and sing to the song "The Good Ship Lollipop". They laughed at W. C. Fields, Bob Hope, and Marx Brothers. Busby Berkeley's elaborate dance numbers delighted many fans. Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers tapping and ballroom dancing across the screen **enthralled** audiences. Notable writers like William Faulkner and F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote screenplays.



Not all movies were fantasy and lightness. The picture version of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* brought to film the story of the Joab family and its **migration** from the Dust Bowl of Oklahoma to the agricultural fields of California. One of the top money makers of all time *Gone with the Wind* debuted in Atlanta, Georgia in 1939. Walt Disney produced the first full-length animated movie *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937.

## CLOTHES

Paris fashions became too expensive for all but the very rich, and American designers came into their own. Hollywood movie stars such as Bette Davis and Greta Garbo set fashion trends in dresses designed by Adrian and Muriel King and hats designed by Lily Dache. Clothes had to last a long time so styles did not change every season. The simple print dress with a waist line and longer hem length replaced the **flapper attire** of the 1920's. The use of the zipper became wide spread for the first time because it was less expensive than the buttons and **closures** previously used. Another **innovation** of the 30's was different hem lengths for different times of the day - mid calf for day wear, long for the evening. Men's pants were wide and high-waisted. Vest sweaters were an alternative to the traditional matching vest of the three piece suit. Hats were mandatory for the well dressed male.



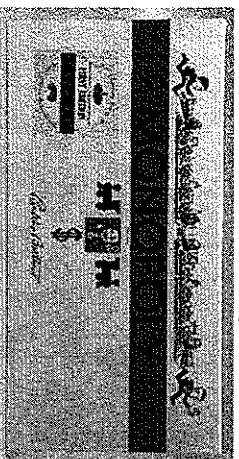
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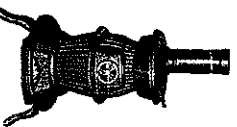
### THINGS TO DO

With the reduction of **spendable** income, people had to look to inexpensive **leisure** pursuits. President Roosevelt helped make stamp collecting a popular hobby. Parlor games and board games became the rage. In 1935 Parker Brothers introduced the game of *Monopoly* and 20,000 sets were sold in one week. Gambling increased as people sought any means to add to their income. Between 1930 and 1939 horse racing became legal in 21 states. Interest in spectator sports such as baseball grew. Stars like Lou Gehrig and Joe DiMaggio drew fans into the stadium, and those who could not attend the games gathered around their radios to listen to the play-by-play. The 1932 Winter Olympics, held at Lake Placid, New York, renewed interest in winter sports. The Civilian Conservation Corps, a **New Deal** work project for youths, built ski runs and jumps on public land as well as recreational facilities in the national parks.



### SCHOOLS

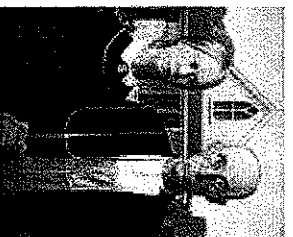
The 1930's were a **perilous** time for public education. With cash money in short supply parents were unable to provide their children with the necessary clothes, supplies, and textbooks (which were not furnished by the schools in some states) to attend school. Taxes, especially in rural areas, went unpaid. With the loss of revenue, school boards were forced to try numerous strategies to keep their districts operating. School terms were shortened. Teachers' salaries were cut. One new teacher was paid \$40 a month for a five month school year - and was very glad for the job! When a rural county in Arkansas was forced to charge tuition to keep the schools open, some children were forced to drop out. One farmer **bartered** wood to fuel the classrooms' **potbellied stoves** for his children's tuition



The famous *Dick and Jane* books that taught millions of children to read were first published in 1931. These **primers** introduced the students to reading with only one new word per page and a limited vocabulary per book. All learned to read with these books - "Look. See Dick. See Dick run."

### ART

This decade saw the beginning of the **American regionalist style** with Grant Wood's famous work, "**American Gothic**". Artists that adopted this style include John Steuart Curry, Thomas Hart Benton, Georgia O'Keeffe with her southwestern themes, and Edward Hopper with realistic scenes from city life.



Many of the nation's most memorable skyscrapers (the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, and Rockefeller Center) were completed in the early 30's. In 1937 the Frank Lloyd Wright **masterpiece** of home design, "**Falling Water**," was built. In 1932 the word "mobile" was **coined** to describe the **kinetic** sculpture created by Alexander Calder. In 1935 Andrew Mellon gave his \$25 million dollar art collection to the American people and contributed \$10 million to the construction of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

From Kingwood College Library *American Cultural History* 1930-1939  
<http://kcilibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade30.html>